Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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Black Out

By Kevin Gray

A black out is in effect. Discussion and action on issues of race, class, human and civil rights, poverty and disparate wealth that were moving to the top of the world political agenda prior to 9/11 are off the table. And many of the people trying to resurrect those issues will probably end up (if they aren't already) on someone's terrorist list.

As American life goes, blacks get it worse and different. The current black out is no exception. Blacks, as Alexis de Tocqueville described, are the "enemy within". If war casualties are high, they may do most of the protesting, thus, they must be controlled more vigorously and specifically than others.

Blacks also buy big gas-guzzling SUVs and thus share an interest in cheap gas. But beyond material interest, there are clearly negative consequences for those who do not go along with the government's plan. They can end up dead or in jail. Martin Luther King and Muhammad Ali are examples of what can happen when you diss the plan.

Barbara Lee, the sole rebel, barely got her voice and photo op of official dissent during the vote giving George Bush II his blank check to wage war. The mainstream media presentation of Lee's image offers three predictable views: radical traitor, out of touch yet well meaning liberal and official dissenter. As of yet, those who cast her in one of those three roles have not widely or thoroughly presented the reasoning behind her vote. Lee stood alone while the generally outspoken Maxine Waters, presidential candidate in training Jesse Jackson Jr. and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus were mute. Even John Lewis, one of King's apostles of nonviolence, voted for revenge and violence. And Cynthia McKinney, who while at the UN Conference on Racism in South Africa, railed against US government domestic spying, voted for the war and against the anti-terrorism bill. Evidently, McKinney's activism is tempered by the militarism of her district.

Then there was John Conyers' puzzling co-sponsorship (with Jim Sensenbrenner) of the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001 which makes legal many of the police state tactics used on a host of radical, left and progressive organizations and people in the US. After passage of the bill, Congressman and former Black Panther Bobby Rush said, "I knew I was casting my vote against J. Edgar Hoover, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan… Once this crisis is over, they're not going to be looking for Osama bin Laden or people who look like Arabs. As usual, they're going to be looking for you and me".

But Rush's initial yea vote for war supports pretty much the same thing. Conyers, as did most black caucus members, eventually voted against the final version of the anti-terrorism bill. Only Corrine Brown, Harold Ford and Chaka Fattah voted with the majority. Apparently, Conyers rationalized that co-sponsorship gave him the input to keep a bad situation from being worse. Still, the war powers vote was, as Dorothy Love Coates once put it, "the separation line" between the saved and the unsaved. Attempts to

(**Black Out** *continued on page 4)*

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Our Little Secrets

The FBI and Torture

A senior FBI man taking a brief vacation break from his labors confides to a CounterPuncher who has known him for a number of years that suspects rounded up in the post-September 11 dragnets have been tortured. He says that some are given a truth drug that "makes their brains hurt". He says he has been having a serious problem forcibly interrogating people who turn out to be innocent. He's asked where this torture is taking place and he says Chicago. He also says that "we won't be seeing a thousand of the detainees again", which our CounterPuncher takes to mean that these have been deported. The FBI man also says government officials have been given smallpox vaccinations and that there were 8 planes scheduled by Atta's gang. CounterPunch has no corroborative evidence for the FBI man's statement.

The Silver Lining?

It had seemed to us that one absolutely certain fact, beyond all dispute or question, is that the terror attacks of September 11 had no silver lining, no unexpectedly beneficial fall-out. September 11 was, is and will be a terrible business with endlessly terrible consequences. It killed thousands, impelled a punitive expedition which will almost certainly procreate further martial forays. The war party is agitating for an onslaught on Iraq. Here in America the backwash of September 11 has shriveled civil liberties and political dissent and we will spend the rest of our lives trying to recapture lost ground.

But no. The editor of the Nation, Katrina vanden Heuvel, (whose periodical has promoted the notion of a "just war" in Afghanistan) has now coauthored a column with Joel Rogers of the University of Wisconsin, published in the Los Angeles Times on November 25, proposing the following:

"If anything, the war on terrorism creates an opening for progressives, not closure—indeed, it presents the opportunity of a lifetime.

"It is a truism of modern politics that war generally mobilizes and helps the democratic left. It does so in part because of the short-term repression wartime often brings, but also because war raises the stakes in politics and invites consideration of wider goals, including justice. War's mobilization of the populace against a shared threat also heightens social solidarity, while underscoring the need for government and other social institutions that transcend or replace the market. And war's horrors daily press the question of how military action can be avoided in the future without abandoning core principles of domestic order…

"All this shifts the playing field of political debate away from those who counsel "let's leave it to the market or the military" as the answer to all human concerns. Far from seeming hard-nosed and realistic, they suddenly appear beside the point, if not immoral. Those who believe in social justice and shared democratic effort in problem solving, by contrast, seem onto something important and even admirable.

"And the hot Christmas dolls this year are firefighters, emergency medical personnel and municipal police.

"In brief, Sept. 11 has made the idea of a public sector, and the society that it serves, attractive again. It enlarged the public's view that unilateral military action is a bad recipe for international peace. This doesn't describe a political space from which the left is forever excluded, but one in which it is virtually invited to reenter mainstream politics."

So here's the supposed silver lining, comrades: the return to favor of Big Government. You want to be reminded of what Big Government has been up to in the past few weeks? The Antiterrorism Act passed by Congress at the President's request in late October guts the Constitution's guarantees of habeas corpus, presumption of innocence, and due process.

It allows the the federal government in the form of the Justice Department, CIA, FBI, and INS to detain non-citizens on non-existent or secret evidence, conduct wiretaps and surveillance without evidence of wrongdoing, conduct searches and seizures without warrant, eavesdrop on private conversations between defendants and their lawyers in violation of attorney-client privilege, and investigate private citizens without 'probable cause'. The bill also allows the government to wield the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 as a weapon to harass dissident organizations under the guise of fighting terrorism, subjecting them to unconstitutional search and seizure.

Add to this trashing of the Bill of Rights the president's order for military tribunals. All this, and the liberal Democrats see this as a time of opportunity to invoke the benefits of big government! On this form, these people would hail concentration camps as encouraging pointers towards a "new sense of collectivity". This is crackpot realism on an epic scale, and we have by no means exhausted the malign idiocy of the vanden Heuvel/Rogers manifesto. For example: "Americans also got a crash course in the unsavory aspects of US foreign policy." Does this mean that because the amiable national discussion of the benefits of torture elicited we should hail September 11 as the instigator of a useful history lesson?

More from vanden Heuvel and Rogers: "[September 11] enlarged the public's view that unilateral military action is a bad recipe for international peace. This doesn't describe a political space from which the left is forever excluded, but one in which it is virtually invited to reenter mainstream politics." We can imagine that just such nonsense was written by Europe's social democrats when, in 1914, they abandoned collective, internationalist opposition to the madness that was about to kill millions, and separately made haste to vote war credits to their various governments. What "mainstream politics" is the left (at least as represented by vanden Heuvel and by Rogers) excitedly joining? The political mainstream has given easy passage to the Patriot Act and in Congress, with just

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one dissenting vote from Rep Barbara Lee of Berkeley, it handed Bush all the war-making powers he craved.

Years ago we learned that most mainstream liberals don't give a hoot about the Bill of Rights, or about the paramount importance of independent, 12-member, unanimous juries, whose central role pervades the Bill of Rights. The liberals' vision of big government is coercive to its core. Eric Hobsbawm showed that the model for the organization of their desired society used by many social democrats in the interwar period was the German War Plan of 1914. FDR's New Deal was basically cribbed from Mussolini's New Order.

So who are our allies then? Who's raising a ruckus amid these devastations of the Constitution? The mainstream isn't raising a ruckus, even against the notion of torture. For voices of conscience and sanity we have to turn to a thin red line of anti-imperial leftists, to the radical bar whose overworked members toil for the immigrants and the poor. We can turn to the libertarians, such as Rep Ron Paul of Texas who has delivered powerful speeches in Congress denouncing Ashcroft's jihad against the Constitution. Ron Paul alone spilled the beans on how a cabal of House Republicans and Democrats rammed through the final version of the Patriot Act without it even being read by House members.

The strongest journalistic voice against the military tribunals has been William Safire, even more forceful than Nat Hentoff whose own denunciations of the rape of the Constitution have been appearing in the Washington Times. From Italy, Gore Vidal has been equally robust, and the only question for us is when Vidal will recant on his announcement last year that Christopher is his "anointed" heir, his "Dauphin". Hitchens of course has been gung-ho for bombing, while simultaneously libeling Noam Chomsky and others, with the assertion that it "no longer matters" what Chomsky thinks.

Ralph Nader delivered a powerful speech against the war and the various green parties have all issued decent statements. The ACLU has shown understanding of the necessity for broad coalitions of left and right to defend the Constitution. It has brought together left civil libertarians with such icons of the far right as Paul Weyrich, Grover Norquist, Phyllis Schlafly, Bob Barr and the Competitive Enterprise Institute, recruiting all these names to the terms of its opposition to the Patriot Act.

That said, we would add that the work of such bodies as the ACLU has so far been reactive. Yet we are confronted with a situation where FBI agents have been sent to "interview" a projected total of 5,000 immigrants who have entered the country in the last two years. We have been told that the FBI agents are under instructions to immediately arrest anyone disclosuing evidence of any violation of law, on the spot. So these interviews are fraught with peril for the uninformed, who may make an innocent misstatement and end up facing perjury charges. So why haven't groups like the ACLU distributed "know your rights" cards for those who have been profiled and are now in the FBI's sights.

Only one US senator, Feingold of Wisconsin, voted against the USA Patriot bill. Though Rep Dennis Kucinich voted for war-making, he has since tried to get the "left" in Congress to pull the plug on Bush's military tribunals, but as of November 28, could only find 37 colleagues to agree with him, one of whom is Bob Barr, the conservative former prosecutor who also was among those attacking from the earliest days the provisions of the USA Patriot Act. And guess who wrote this: "Today, America is being stampeded into a new undeclared war, against Iraq. This is a time for truth – a time for Congress to do its duty, and debate and decide on war or peace. We do not need to have our politics poisoned for yet another generation by the mutual recriminations of a War Party and a Peace Party in the aftermath of yet another undeclared war… No more undeclared wars. No more presidential wars." It was Patrick Buchanan who, like Safire, wrote speeches for Richard Nixon.

Years ago we learned that most mainstream liberals don't give a hoot about the Bill of Rights.

We've always said that the true contours of American politics are in no way reflected by the conventional political maps. The post-Sept. 11 events have confirmed that analysis with acid clarity.

MARRIED TO A MUSLIM TRUCK DRIVER

CounterPuncher Vanessa Jones sends us this dispatch from Australia.

It may sometimes be wondered how Anglo Saxon (read English speaking and white- currently Australian) women are married to Arabic men of Egyptian (currently Australian) Muslim upbringings. Princess Diana was going to try it but unfortunately we weren't able to see that. I thought I should offer a reality check on life with the "Other". The "Other" is my husband.

Formerly going by an Arabic first name, my husband currently goes by an Anglo first name and surname, which stopped all sorts of questions. Are you Muslim? Are you Christian? When did you come here? Are you a practicing Muslim? Blah blah blah. Do we ask every European person we meet how often they go to church? We were sitting at Bronte Beach in Sydney, going through names. He'd only been here 9 months. Thinking of names which are cross-cultural and easy to move within professions and classes. It was his idea. I still call him by his birth name, and after September 11, I'm glad my kids and husband won't be picked on for having an Arabic family or first name. He had good foresight. Once in Paris I met a wonderful Egyptian man, Osama. I had toyed with the idea of calling my first son that. And history shows it was wise to heed caution.

Well, to look at, my husband is what I'd call tall, dark and handsome. I'm tall with brown hair and hazel eyes and rounder than before I had two boys! We have two sons (one in an extremely long, naively drug-free labor and one an emergency breech caesarean). We currently live in Canberra, the all too quiet capital of Australia. A city originally designed by the American born Walter Burley Griffin, because a choice between Sydney and Melbourne as a capital could not be made.

It is set amongst sun-scorched paddocks and sheep. The corn for the chooks (Australian chickens) has run out, so luckily this provincial, and parochial town has an animal feed store nearby. In ten minutes I can pick up a 40 kg bag of corn for $21 and also, I drive past the Italian fruit stall guy, Tom, on the way past the paddocks and can pick up some fresh veggies. The hard working Italian-Australian businessman. Not actually a farmer, just faking it, to satisfy the rustic, paddock-filled dreams of Canberra public servants, and those who want to escape the reality of a public service town.

On one of these stop-offs at Tom the

(**OLS** continued on page 6)

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portray opposition to the anti-terrorism bill as nuanced defiance to the war does not move those who abandoned peace to the saved side of the line.

With the possible exception of Lee and a few others, black leadership inside and outside of government, if there is such a thing, has surrendered to white, male leadership. For sure, Cornel West and Al Sharpton got in a one-liner or two about US policy in the Middle East being bad. But for the most part, elite black leadership and organizations are in the pockets of corporate America and know not to bite the hand that feeds them, even when they are not being that well fed. That is unless you take a Harvard-led poor peoples' movement or a possible presidential run as serious models of defiance. And Bush's warning of "You're either with us or against us" makes clear the threat against their meal ticket.

Kweisi Mfume of the NAACP wrapped himself and his organization in the flag, repeatedly pledging its support of the war and citing the "traditional patriotism of black Americans". He quickly rebuked Curtis Gatewood, president of the organization's Durham, North Carolina branch for denouncing the US plan for military retaliation. Oddly, Mfume raised the ghost of Crispus Attucks to explain polling data that ironically had 71 percent of blacks supporting racial profiling of Arabs or those of Middle Eastern origin.

Jesse Jackson Sr. checked the limits of the black out by suggesting he might go to Afghanistan. But he quickly found out that anything other than support for war and "God Bless America" was out. He was lampooned from syndicated morning black talk radio to NBC's Saturday Night Live to the editorial page cartoons. After the sting of the whipping over his aborted trip faded, Jackson put out a column posing the old Nixon/Kissinger line of "peace with honor" and then shut up. That is unless you consider his day late opposition to the anti-terrorism bill as saying something.

Predictably, the most notable criticism of US policy from the black religious community is coming from Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, although he has yet to offer outright condemnation of the Afghan war. At a New York event reported in black newspapers across the country, Farrakhan said that American policymakers were "dripping with the blood of hundreds of thousands of people around the globe". He also cautioned the US government to be "careful" not to start a religious war and asked to see the "overwhelming evidence" against bin Laden. Still, neither Farrakhan nor Christian ministers Al Sharpton and Jackson Sr. have much sway within the organized black religious community. The people with the power are the ministers in the pulpit and the deacon boards and ladies' auxiliaries that support them. And down in the black belt south where WWJD ("What Would Jesus Do?") bumper stickers are just as common as Confederate and American flags, black and white Christians have avoided applying the Jesus question to the current situation. Even after Bush II declared war in a church – the National Cathedral.

Without a doubt, it has always been difficult for progressive voices to get their message out. But civil rights leadership has been noticeably gagged since 9/11. As a result, black Americans, like everyone else, are being propagandized into support of an Old Testament 'eye for an eye' foreign policy, a war that punishes and kills poor, starving Afghans and the expansion of the very police state they have fought for decades.

"I think we have a responsibility to remember what was going on September 10. It's still the same system."

Blacks are not politically monolithic. Yet the day before the terrorists' attacks, the illegitimacy of the Bush presidency was a given in much of the black community. Bush's most ardent critics were black Democratic officials and activists such as Sharpton, Jackson Sr. and even Mfume and his organization. They charged that the 2000 election goings-on in Florida and the decision of the Supreme Court in Bush's favor was nothing less than a coup d'état. Sharpton's possible run for president is pitched as a protest over black voter disenfranchisement. Now, in war, all is forgiven if not forgotten.

Consider that for the past 20 years or so the US has waged a "war on drugs" against black and brown citizens. The theme of the war is "stop the violence". Civil rights groups, schools, public officials and others have bought into the theme. Americans have waged a war against themselves, their children, kin and friends. The superficial focus has been on ending gang violence and thug life. In the eighties, (coincidentally the generation where the current group of military enlistees is drawn from) the popular movies were Boyz in the Hood, Menace to Society and Colors, just to name a few. The music of choice for young ghetto dwellers and wannabe busters: the much-maligned gangsta rap. The recurring act in thug life is protecting your turf and fellow G's. If rival gangbangers bum rush your spot and kill a homey, the dissed gang members pile in their rides and go off to shoot up the rival's hood.

So, what is the difference between the "boyz in the hood" and the boyz in the White House and Congress? Not a whole lot. Americans have been bum rushed into hysteria and the response is like that of gangbangers. Perhaps this explains why one can see American flags flying on the cars of young black men who before 9/11 were the targets of men wearing the same flag. Some fly it in hopes of keeping the man off their backs. But others may correctly see it as America embracing its true thug self.

There is a general mainstream media censoring of all voices opposed to thug life. Clear Channel's list of songs it proposed to ban along with the firing of Davey D at San Francisco's KMEL, a firing directly resulting from his airing a serious interview with Barbara Lee, was just the beginning of the new media repression. If it does not support thug life, it is not heard. And on those rare occasions when opposition sneaks through, it is ignored, ridiculed or crushed. That is what happened to Lee and Davey D. Nobody in mainstream media wanted her to say why she voted the way she did. Now, the Patriot Act consummates the marriage between corporate censorship and government suppression of speech and dissent. Corporate media will continue to ban from the airwaves anything more complex than fear, revenge, boosterism, flag waving, amnesic recollections of history, foreign policy fakery and emoting.

We Shall Overcome was sung at one of the memorial events. I could not tell whether the song was being sung to evoke the triumph over tragedy through love,

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"I'm almost glad I'm on this boat because I was overwhelmed with too much information. But still, guys on the tug, I've heard them say, 'our policy on Palestine hasn't helped this.'"

forgiveness and redemption or if it was just being misused as a violent battle cry. Haitian singer Wycliff Jean, wearing a coat with an embossed American flag singing Bob Marley's *Redemption Song* at an earlier celebrity fundraising telethon could have been subtle insurrection. However, the singing of the civil rights standard is more significant in the black out because it is an unambiguous cultural prompt aimed at bringing blacks in line with the war. White Americans singing a song that many once scorned or dismissed has a subtle, yet powerful, impact on the psyche of black people. It exploits black feelings of hope that America can overcome the race dilemma.

With few exceptions, black celebrity voices have been limited to singing, boosterism, patriotic posing and shamming. Since 9/11, Ray Charles' "America the Beautiful" and Whitney Houston's version of the national anthem is everywhere while Edwin Starr's "War" is off the play list. Thankfully, Marvin Gaye's "Star-Spangled Banner", which is the best soul version for purists, gets limited to no airplay. Rapper Chuck D formerly of Public Enemy was able to warn his hip-hop constituents: "don't believe the hype!" Alice Walker has spoken out against the war but her voice has not been widely heard, at least not in the Deep South. Comedian Steve Harvey, who was scheduled to appear on CBS's David Letterman Show, said he would not "sacrifice his son" to the war effort. After his anti-war remarks, his appearance on the show was cancelled. According to published reports, Harvey said he was afraid to fly to New York while the terrorists' alert was in effect. But his "Kings of Comedy" bud, D.J. Hugley, while on NBC's Conan O'Brian show, made a passing remark about "being black a man and understanding racial profiling", then nullified his concern as he joked that while flying east, he asked the fight attendant "to check out Mohammed in the back of him". His remark is indicative of the trend in wartime black comedy to make light of profiling.

A significant percentage of those of the Islamic faith in America are African American. Hugley's Mohammed could be Muhammed Ali. Of the 5.7 million Muslims in America, an estimated 2.3 million or more are black, including the 100,000 or so members of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam. But 75 percent of blacks of Islamic faith are straight up Sunni Muslims. African Muslims in America can be traced back to 1619 — an estimated 10 per cent of enslaved Africans were Muslim. So, in comparison to the 36 million African Americans, a little less than 10 per cent are Muslim.

Intuitively, one might think that African Americans would be inclined to seek solidarity with Arab Americans and Middle Eastern immigrants. This is not the case. The simple explanation for why blacks might be fearful of Arabs is the events of 9/11. Arab men crashed planes into buildings. Of course, with that logic, they should want profiling of whites due to the crime of Oklahoma bomber Tim McVeigh. 9/11 aside, there is resentment of Arab Americans by many blacks who see them as being assimilated into whiteness. Some blacks see the relationship between blacks and Middle-Eastern Americans as one of exploitation. The perception stems from the fact that Middle-Easterners own many of the new businesses in the inner city while blacks still face obstacles to business ownership. And over the years, there has been very little political or social coalition building between racial minorities in the US.

A closer look also reveals a poisonous mix of fear, ignorance, resentment and the illusion of acceptance. Why else would African Americans paradoxically support racial profiling, a tool used against them from the enslavement trade to the present? What other than madness can explain why blacks would physically attack the "lost boys of the Sudan" living in Atlanta, thinking they were Muslims when in fact they were Christians? Just as troubling was the response by the Sudanese men's American sponsors. The Sudanese were given gold crosses to wear around their necks reminiscent of the Star of David worn by Jews in Nazi Germany.

It is counterproductive to the civil rights agenda and dangerous for black leadership to be silent or supportive of a war complete with a suspension of Bill of Rights and international human rights protections, more spies at home and abroad, a future of more government-sponsored assassinations, reliance on more clandestine military and police operations to include (per former Secretary of Army Togo West's 1994 report) all white or predominately white special operations units with a history of racism and infiltration by white supremacists. Black political goals are now in a deeper freeze by the requirement of unity. And under the heavy cloak of unity is a rightward shift in US economic priorities with policies guaranteeing corporate bailouts at the expense of workers who themselves are in need of a bailout in these hard economic times.

A movement based on representing the poor should insist on US government policies to address those legitimate claims that exploited people around the world have against this country. To that end, black leadership must defy the black out or what good are they? **CP**

Kevin Gray is a civil rights organizer in South Carolina and CounterPunch contributor.

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The arid inland area of Australia was opened up by Afghani camel goods transporters.

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veggie man, I asked him what he thought of the 438 boat people, rescued by the Tampa, who had fled mainly Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and were trying to come here. The boat people John Howard would not let into our international borders. I videotaped each night of the August 'til September 2001 news, not believing the direction my country was taking. I still have the front cover of the newspaper that showed the Tampa stranded off Christmas Island on August 28, 2001, two days after Arne Rinnan rescued the people. The orange ship the Tampa, against a calm blue sea. I later wrote to Arne Rinnan and to the Norwegian Embassy in Canberra to say that as a mother of Arabic-Anglo children, I'd feel safe that he'd help them at any time, in any international waters, whatever their race or religion. Pregnant women were on that ship. Tom the veggie man took the safe line of saying they should have waited in the queue.

Another refugee boat that was barred from entering Australian waters had a fire onboard and two women drowned. A boat leaving Indonesia for Australia sank and many passengers drowned. On the day of the Australian Federal election, November 10, 2001, the Weekend Australian published on the front page the sentiments of two of the Australian Navy officers of the HMAS Tobruk as it prepared to leave Ashmore reef with 262 Iranians, Iraqis and Afghans. It was a navy boat transporting yet another boatload of asylum seekers away from Australian shores, to poorer islander nations, to hide them before an election. "In the middle of the night," said one officer, "I looked down from the bridge. There's two hatches open and it's hot. Through one, I could see a hundred people lying there on stretchers. I thought, 'It's like a slave ship.'"

It is interesting to know that the arid inland area of Australia was opened up by Afghani camel transporters, who carried goods across the vast desert, before road or trains dominated the freight industry. The inland train, The Ghan, is named in their honour. Now the arid inland desert detains refugees until they are processed. Many detainees have set fire to and vandalised the detention centres as a desperate attempt to finalize their processing. We moved to Canberra for a balanced life and affordable housing.

The kids are playing on the floor. The chooks, non-crowing rooster, duck and ducklings are outside in our quarter acre block yard. The Greek neighbors next door till their garden and plant broad beans, fennel, tomatoes. In Canberra they put out tomato seedlings on the day of The Melbourne Cup horse race, not before, to avoid the frost. The neighbors came here in the 1960s wave of European immigration to Australia. Our other neighbors are Anglo Australian and Filipino Australian. The neighbors next to them are Yugoslavian. No more details that I know. The neighbors on the other side of the Greek elderly couple are Anglo Australian, who used to run the local video store.

Into this street, and into many ways this Australia, my children are immersed. They enter this world, this street, with various accents, visiting Grandmas and nightly news/propaganda. Recently a Conservative Australian Coalitian Government was returned on the wave of racism and low interest rates. The people who Arne Rinnan rescued and stood by were used as pawns for a return of John Howard's government to power for a third term. The only consoling and redeeming factor of this election was the doubling of the Greens vote in Australia, led by Bob Brown. The Greens and Bob Brown were internationally recorded as making a stand in articulating the refugees' rights and concerns, whilst receiving bullets in the mail afterwards.

When I explained to my 5-year old 2 weeks ago that we had to get dressed for voting--the process of choosing someone who will be good at making decisions about good hospitals, good parks, good schools, he asked me "are you going to vote for Bob Brown?' The astute, uncoached question made me crack up (laughing) in my backyard. A yard of roses, honeysuckle, a green lawn and growing native shrubs. The laughter stopped amongst the scent of fennel and we drove off in our dual cab, white 1984 Holden Rodeo, a quintessentially Australian ute, to vote, whilst Daddy did a Saturday job with his truck. **CP**

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Meet the Nuts Who Think 9/11 Has a Silver Lining

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